Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A method of thinning at least one silicon wafer, comprising the steps of:

placing the wafer into a process chamber;

forming an aqueous liquid layer on a bare silicon surface of the wafer;

delivering ozone gas into the process chamber to oxidize a layer of silicon on the bare silicon surface of the wafer; and

delivering HF into the process chamber, with the HF etching the oxidized silicon layer to decrease a thickness of the wafer.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the HF comprises vapor and is delivered into the process chamber via a carrier gas including ozone.

3-6 (Cancelled).

7. (Original) The method of claim 2 further comprising the step of generating the HF vapor by bubbling the carrier gas through an HF solution contained in a vapor generator.

8. (Cancelled).

9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising delivering HF into the process chamber by generating an HF vapor by mixing anhydrous HF gas with water vapor.

10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising delivering HF into the process chamber by generating an HF vapor by bubbling anhydrous HF gas into water.

11. (Cancelled).

12. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of removing the etched oxidized silicon from the process chamber via a system exhaust.

13. (Currently Amended) A method of thinning an uncoated surface of a silicon wafer, comprising:

placing the wafer into a process chamber;

delivering ozone gas into the process chamber to ~~oxidize a~~ form an oxidized silicon layer ~~of silicon~~ on a surface of the wafer;

delivering HF into the process chamber;

spraying DI water onto a surface of the wafer with the HF**[[;]]** dissolving ~~the HF~~ into the DI water on the wafer surface; and

etching the oxidized silicon layer with the dissolved HF to decrease a thickness of the wafer.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 13 wherein HF comprises anhydrous HF gas and the anhydrous HF gas is mixed with ozone before being delivered into the process chamber.

15. (Original) The method of claim 13 further comprising the step of forming a microscopic aqueous boundary layer on the surface of the wafer with the DI water.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15 further comprising the step of dissolving the ozone gas into the microscopic aqueous boundary layer.

17. (Original) The method of claim 13 further comprising the step of removing the etched oxidized silicon from the process chamber via a system exhaust.

18. (Original) The method of claim 13 further comprising the step of rinsing the wafer after the etching step is complete.

19. (Cancelled).

20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the HF is delivered into the process chamber in vapor form.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20 wherein the HF vapor is delivered into the process chamber via a carrier gas.

22. (Original) The method of claim 21 wherein the carrier gas comprises ozone.

23. (Original) The method of claim 20 wherein the removing step comprises exhausting the SiF_4 in vapor form from the process chamber.

24. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the HF is delivered into the process chamber in aqueous form.

25. (Cancelled).

26. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the ozone gas and the HF are mixed with one another before being delivered into the process chamber.

27. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the aqueous liquid layer is a microscopic layer.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the aqueous liquid layer is a visible liquid layer.

29. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the HF comprises a vapor, an aqueous liquid, or an anhydrous gas.

30. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of spinning the wafer.

31. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 13 further comprising spinning the wafer.

32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein a batch of wafers are placed in the process chamber.

33. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the wafer is etched at more than about 1000 Angstroms/minute ~~100 nm/minute~~.

34. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the wafer is etched at more than about 5000 Angstroms/minute ~~500 nm/minute~~.

35. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the wafer thickness is reduced to about 50-100 microns by back-grinding and then by the ozone gas and the HF chemically reacting with the silicon wafer.

36. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the wafer thickness is reduced by at least 400 microns by back-grinding and then by the ozone gas and the HF chemically reacting with the silicon wafer.

37. (Cancelled).

38. (Currently Amended) A method of thinning a silicon wafer having at least one silicon surface, comprising :

spinning the wafer in a process chamber;

forming an aqueous liquid layer on a silicon surface of the wafer;

contacting the aqueous liquid layer with an oxidizer to oxidize ~~one or more layers of silicon on~~ the silicon surface of the wafer; and

delivering anhydrous HF gas into the chamber, with the anhydrous HF gas mixing with the aqueous liquid ~~hydrogen fluoride into the process chamber, with the hydrogen fluoride converting to hydrofluoric acid~~ and etching the oxidized silicon ~~layers~~ surface to make the wafer thinner.

39. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 38 wherein the aqueous liquid layer is macroscopic.

40. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 38 ~~wherein the wafer has a thickness that is reduced to 100 microns or less via the~~ further comprising back-grinding or plasma etching the wafer. ~~ozone and the oxidizer chemically reacting with the silicon wafer.~~

41. (New) The method of claim 38 wherein the silicon is etched at more than 500 nm/minute.